

Ex-Gulf Lobbyist Disbarred For Illegal '72 Contributions

By Eugene L. Meyer

Washington Post Staff Writer

The D.C. Court of Appeals has barred former Gulf Oil Corp. vice-president Claude C. Wild Jr. from practicing law for a year for his admitted role in channeling \$100,000 in illegal corporate campaign contributions to the 1972 Nixon re-election campaign.

The appeals court, upholding the recommendation of the D.C. bar disciplinary board, rejected Wild's contention that he should receive no more than the 30-day suspension imposed on former Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst in another Watergate-related case.

Wild is scheduled to stand trial here shortly on other charges of making alleged illegal campaign contributions on Gulf's behalf to two Senate races. As Gulf's chief Washington lobbyist, Wild has been named in court records as having disbursed \$5.4 million in corporate campaign cash during a 15-year period.

The appeals court, in its opinion Tuesday, acknowledged that Wild "some pressure" by Nixon campaign officials to provide the laundered funds

but nonetheless had engaged in "misrepresentation and deceit" of Gulf shareholders and the public "in an effort to prevent public disclosure of a political gift by a corporation."

In 1974, Wild pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court here to a misdemeanor charge of making illegal corporate contributions and received the maximum fine of \$1,000, but no jail term from Chief Judge George L. Hart Jr.

Wild, the appeals panel recalled, secretly transferred funds from a Bahamian Gulf subsidiary to the Committee to Re-Elect the President and directed Nixon fund raiser Maurice Stans to list the contributions as made by "employees of Gulf Corporation."

The action, the court said, was "a patent effort to circumvent the law in violation of the public interest and the public good."

The one-year suspension recommended by the disciplinary board and approved by the court was less than the two-year suspension initially urged by the board committee that heard Wild's case.

Since Wild's actions were not among specifically enumerated "serious crimes"

calling for automatic suspension, the appeals court had asked the bar's disciplinary board for its recommendation.

The Kleindienst case was handled similarly by the court. Kleindienst had entered a misdemeanor guilty plea before Chief Judge Hart for making misleading statements to a Senate committee concerning White House involvement in the ITT anti-trust case.

In Kleindienst's case, Hart had said his offense "reflects a heart that is too loyal and considerate of the feelings of others." Hart gave him 30 days unsupervised probation and a minimum \$100 fine.

The bar disciplinary board then urged a one-year suspension of Kleindienst's right to practice law, but the D.C. Court of Appeals in a split decision, settled on 30 days.

Wild, who resigned his Gulf position March 1, 1974, compared his case to Kleindienst's in asking the Court of Appeals for a "token suspension" of 30 days. Such a disposition, Wild had argued, "would serve as sufficient disciplinary action in the maintenance of the distinction between fitness and punishment."